2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

42

CHAPTER III

LAND, LABOR, AND MONEY

A PEASANT'S life in spring and summer centered around the narrow strips of earth which surrounded the village. If the scene of labor was distant from the village, the tired workers who had been at their tasks since sunup often spent the night in the field rather than trudge the long way back home. In the middle of the morning, at noon, and again in midafternoon, the toilers stopped long enough for food, sometimes only bread and salt, and a little sleep. The burning noonday sun sifted through the leaves of the solitary tree beneath which the people sprawled. Fragile rays danced upon tired faces, old-fashioned costumes, a hand raised to brush away a fly, and oxen chewing lazily. Like animals the peasants worked, like animals they slept; but when harvest time brought an end to their toil they experienced the joyous satisfaction of work well done.

The average farm was about eighteen acres in size and was composed of sixteen separate and widely scattered strips. (See Table 10, Appendix I.) This land sold for a comparatively high figure because of its nearness to Sofia, but not because of any superior quality. In fact, most of the soil was sandy and gravelly, with a mixture of heavy clay.

In addition to a house in the village and his land, the peasant also owned a few animals and agricultural implements. The work animals numbered fewer than two for an eighteen-acre holding, and the plow was the only large implement found on every farm. More than any other joint operation, plowing had the flavor of an antique ritual. At dawn a slow procession moved from the village. The distant Balkan range loomed vaguely blue far across the Sofia plain, and the golden dome of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia shone in the thin, clear light of morning. Behind the village, the slopes of

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

stopanin, or male head of the house, killed the cock and held its twitching body over a bag of grain seed so that several drops of blood would fall upon it. He then drove slowly to the field to prepare the ground for the sowing, meanwhile eagerly awaiting the arrival at midmorning of the *domakinya,* his wife, dressed in her most beautiful costume and bearing a pan containing the boiled cock, meal, and bread. The family group made a tour once around the field, whereupon the man solemnly broke the bread and, before sitting with the others in the middle of the field to feast, gave pieces of the bread to the oxen. The peasants called this the "sweetest meal of the year" and delighted in having friends from a neighboring field join them in the repast. Summer's hard work was at an end; the harvests were plentiful; the peasants were deeply grateful.

Life in these scattered fields of Dragalevtsy was hard and laborious, but to the peasant, life without the fields would not be worth living, for these narrow strips of land were his children growing under his painstaking care. The land was his companion and friend, as he shared with it the thoughts and dreams of a starlit summer night, with a cloak for a pillow and dew for a blanket. Land meant more to the peasant than money in the bank; it meant more than food on the table; it meant life itself.

Some years ago I heard a Sofia University professor say in a lecture that the Bulgarian peasant was more devoted to his work than to his religion. "There are more songs dedicated to labor than to saints," he added. Because I wondered about the truth of this statement in respect to Dragalevtsy, I polled village opinion. Here are some of the questions I asked, with representative or characteristic responses:

Nowadays, which do people enjoy most: working in the field or sitting in the tavern?

"People work to get bread. They can't earn money enough to save. Some prefer to work in the fields because we quarrel when we are in the *kruchma.*"

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

was also conflict over the location of boundary stones. At first I could scarcely believe my eyes when I was shown how the peasants distinguished their fields. Taking some landmark such as a tree, a bend in the road, or a stream, the peasants marked off their strips by small piles of stone. Fences and hedgerows were impracticable because the strips were too small to justify the expense of enclosure. Since every farmer possessed several strips, possibilities of conflict over the boundaries were numerous. The wonder is that there was so little trouble, in view of the fact that every foot of the strip must be utilized if the farmer was to make any profit.

Animals too proved a source of dispute. The oxen, for instance, strayed into an unprotected field and did considerable damage to the growing crop. The person incurring loss often took the matter to the mayor for trial in his magistrate's court. Once an effort was made to have all funds collected from such disputes turned over to the local *Chitalishte,* or Library Association, but this received little public support. For some time there was very bad feeling between the shepherds and the dairymen over the question of pasturage. The *Obshtina,* or local government, passed an ordinance that grazing should be done on one's own land and the common pasture abolished. The shepherds, accustomed to roaming over a considerable area in a day's time, were violently opposed to the new measure; those possessing five or six head of cattle naturally favored it.

Other types of conflict also arose over animals. The widow Zdravka, in explaining to me why she was not on good terms with her neighbor Dimiter, brought another case of disagreement over livestock to my attention:

"Just before St. Peter's Day, Dimiter's dogs fell upon my sow as she passed his yard on her way home from pasture. The pig, which was to bear young the next day, became frightened and fell into a ditch. I immediately went to the veterinarian who told me that the pig's young would be stillborn, and sure enough, they were. I went to the priest and the mayor to ask for justice, but Dimiter told them that he didn't let his dogs out and the accident wasn't his fault. Since he was a man, nothing was done to him and I can't do anything about it myself."

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

441 596 [178] In Dragalevtsy, therefore, familism had yielded some ground to commerce. People did make occasional purchases in the village and in Sofia. They talked more and thought more about money. They even valued it more highly than a generation ago, but the basis of their economic life remained self-subsistent, with an emphasis upon goods, not cash.

476 596 Co-operatives had also come to Dragalevtsy. In a very real sense village life itself was a co-operative enterprise, although it did not possess the specific characteristics of an economic co-operative. The large joint family, which has been widely prevalent throughout the world, also had many elements of the co-operative which have been maintained, at least in the sentiments of the people, even though the family group has become individualized and smaller.

Self-subsistent peasant farmers are accustomed to working together when something needs to be done. Theirs is, after all, a co-operative way of life. They also know that their own hard work and their own planning are responsible for whatever success they achieve. They are suspicious of outsiders who seek to organize them, and are fearful that any tie-up with the business interests outside the village means loss rather than gain. They are not accustomed to using money to make more money, although they know well enough what it means to pay interest on borrowed money.

[369] [423] Agricultural co-operatives often gain adherents more quickly when there is a feeling of distinction or distrust between city and the country people. This is because co-operatives have been identified in such places with the agrarianism which unites the peasants. The profit motive of capitalism is linked, in the minds of many villagers, with the urban businessman, in spite of the fact that the villager who owns his land is also a capitalist. Perhaps it is this idea which Americans find hardest to grasp in their evaluation of peasant Europe. Land is not something to be bought and unfeelingly sold for money. It is rather a means of livelihood, an extension of oneself and one's family.

476 As the merchant groups in the villages are few and insecure, the co-operatives do not have the opposition of vested interests which they face in a more highly developed economy. I realized from the beginning that co-operatives had made much less headway in Dragalevtsy

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

But peasant prosperity, especially in a village so close to Sofia, was also based on black-market activities. Even in 1945 economists estimated that about ninety-five per cent of all dairy products reached the urban consumer through the black market at prices fantastically high. The peasants, moreover, had learned new ways of circumventing government requisitioning during the war. Just after harvesting, while rye and wheat crops were still in the field, they would shake from one-fifth to one-fourth of the grain onto blankets and secretly hide this amount from the Germans. Then they would, as the law decreed, take the sheaves to the village to be threshed. A part of this threshed grain, varying in amount each year with the size of the harvest, had to be turned over to the authorities at prices fixed by the government, but the previously sequestered grain could be used at home or disposed of at black market prices.

One additional economic factor of importance[1] was the rise in land values, which surpassed the general rise in prices. For instance, I had not been in the village long before I learned how valuable was the land on the right as one approached the village from Sofia. Within two years the land had gone up ten times, from 35 leva per square meter to 300-400 leva. No wonder then that peasants had been ridding themselves of their debts, selling a field or two if necessary to put them in the clear. Some of the poorer families had been deriving extra income from the earnings of about twenty teen-aged girls who went daily to Sofia to work in the knitting mill. This was a concession to industrialism which the Dragalevtsy peasants would not have made back in 1937, and it was already having some effect upon village life.

But perhaps one of the greatest economic changes was the reversal of the trend toward dairying mentioned in earlier chapters. Shortly after my departure from Dragalevtsy, a milk producers' co-operative had been established in the village, largely through government prompting and support, and collected all of the milk formerly taken to Sofia by the individual milkmen. The co-operative also ran a grocery store and sold large quantities of feed to the farmers. Owing to price policies of the co-operative and the government price-fixing agency, the peasants began to consider dairying unprofitable. They

[1] [Following World War II -- Analyst]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

But some of the peasants who turned Communists were having their days of religious doubt. They asked quite frequently, "Can we be Communists and still believe in God?" They voluntarily sent their children to the priest's class in religion held in the schoolhouse. "And the Communist children know their lessons better than the children of the opposition," was the opinion of a member of the intelligentsia.

The ideas of many new converts to the Marxist doctrine had been rudely shaken the previous summer at the time of the church processional for rain. The drought had been devastating. Corn was drying up; pastures were turning brown. So a band of villagers, with some Communists who went along for old times' sake, accompanied the priest on a circuit of the fields. The boys carried the church relics and the priest walked faithfully along in his hot, black vestments. No rain came and the Communists thoroughly enjoyed scoffing at those who had started out with such bright hopes. Conditions grew worse and worse, so the religious leaders thought another processional in order. The whole performance was repeated, with Communists along again. This time the priest went up high on the mountainside, so as to include village properties not previously visited. His prayers were efficacious, for a shower which later turned to steady rain burst forth upon the band of villagers, wetting them to the skin before they could return to shelter in the village. The religious people thus had the last word when atheism was discussed.

The prevalent feeling of insecurity included more, however, than beliefs and basic attitudes about religion and politics. It stemmed also from the economic uncertainty which characterized the period. Always lurking in the peasant's consciousness was the fear that his holding, his precious acres, would be collectivized as was done in Russia. It mattered not to him that his farming was inefficiently done or that such inefficiency was no solution for the overpopulation which characterized his land. He wanted no part of a great impersonal *kolkhoz* where in the long run he would become a worker instead of an owner, or where he would work land which he could not call his own. That to him was serfdom; it was not freedom. And discussions of these topics trailed off into many beside-the-point objections, which

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

668 nevertheless seemed important to the peasant. I recall one such
178 discussion which dealt with the idea of a shortened work-week at the
626 factories. The peasants disapproved of the whole plan and used it
● 429 as a basis for condemning land collectivization because "We want to
829 be able to work as long as we want without having people tell us that we have to stop working."

Peasants were greatly confused, therefore, over the farm policies to be pursued in the next two or three years. They planned and schemed and talked endlessly about what they should plant, what they should do about their debts, or whether the aged fathers should distribute their land to their sons before they died. But always there was the great unknown of government policy which upset their calculations and kept them insecure.

668 Another important social change was occuring in the institutional
178 pattern of Dragalevtsy. In earlier chapters we noted how the en-
596 croachment of the state was making considerable impact upon the traditional familistic patterns, while economic life was becoming more commercialized and religious activities were declining in importance. The coming of the Communists had begun to weaken the family ties even further, for the Fatherland Front had given votes to all women and had thus attacked the dogma of male supremacy; it had honored the young at the expense of the aged; and it had turned brother against brother as the struggle for control grew more bitter. As the representative of the central government, the Fatherland Front was affecting an even larger area of life than the prewar regime did, especially when its economic regulations and its threat to the hallowed traditional system of landownership.

668 Another disturbing effect was the substitution of Moscow as
771 the center of the universe, for the Communist adherents at least, when
178 formerly Dragalevtsy or perhaps Sofia by courtesy was thought to be
829 the center. These innovations of the present government had done much to prejudice it in the eyes of the people, who made decisions not upon the basic issues which the government was striving to champion, but resisted blindly and perhaps fanatically simply because the new regime spelled the end of their way of life. As they realized this, some of the peasants turned more and more to the church, the institu-

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1
216

RETROSPECT, 1948

000 As soon as I began to understand what was happening in Dragalevtsy I knew that I was in touch with something tremendously important. Here, in a Bulgarian village which I had once known intimately, I was encountering the same peasant reactions which I had found in many parts of Yugoslavia, a country which also was experiencing political and social upheaval. The Yugoslavs had a National Liberation Front under Tito which paralleled Bulgaria's Fatherland Front under Georgi Dimitrov. Throughout Serbia, in Dalmatia, Croatia, and parts of the Vojvodina I heard Yugoslav peasants complaining about their new regime in the same overtones and undertones as did my Dragalevtsy friends.

What was there about the Communist-dominated governments that the peasants did not like? It was not until I had left the Balkans, and was weatherbound in Vienna, that I had time to formulate the reasons. Some of these have already been mentioned in the discussion of postwar changes in Dragalevtsy, but they can be accurately applied to those other areas in the Balkans where landed peasants are the rule.

668 The Communists are aware of the peasant's hunger for more
● 423 land and have instituted land reforms to bring about a greater mass
471 ownership of the farming areas, on the principle that "the land belongs to those who till it." But in the case of those who have land, even in quantities small enough not to be affected by the reform laws, the governments have given little assurance that the land will remain private property for an indefinite period. Constitutions guarantee this, to be sure, but constitutions mean little to many authoritarian regimes. The greatest insecurity in the rural Balkans today, as previously pointed out in the case of Dragalevtsy, is the ever-present threat that one's land may sooner or later be taken over by the state and operated as a government holding. Part of the Communist policy may be the promotion of this uncertainty on the theory that insecure people are more easily controlled. But when one tampers

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

with a relationship as deep-rooted as that of the Balkan peasant to his land, he is also creating the seeds out of which a spontaneous resistance movement could grow. There is little evidence of collectivization at present, but the peasants are not convinced that it is not just around the corner.

Then too, the Balkan peasants, especially in the settled agricultural areas, have not taken kindly to Communism because they characterize it as an urban movement. When seasoned Communists try to converse with peasants about the merits of the Russian system their factory-oriented dialectic falls flat. Nor have they developed an agricultural vocabulary with which to communicate intelligibly with the rural people. The more the Balkan Communists talk, the more the peasants are convinced of the urban orientation of the new government. They consider it anti-Agrarian and anti-peasant. In an attempt to overcome this reserve to their program the Communists organize deputation teams of artisans who spend Sundays out in carefully selected villages helping the peasants repair their wagons, mend their pots and pans, or they even bring along a corps of barbers to cut the villagers' hair. The spirit behind such a move is to have the artisans show by their deeds, "You see, we are your friends. We're all brother Bulgarians [or Yugoslavs, as the case may be]." But it takes more than this to sell such a radical program as Communism to the capitalistic-minded peasant.

The rural villagers elsewhere in the Balkans, as well as in Dragalevtsy, resent the term worker. Newspapers studiously attempt to get the worker ideology accepted by the rural citizens, but the social statuses of the peasant and the worker are such that the government is asking the former to step down a rung, in the peasant's estimation. So Communism is thought to represent a backward rather than a forward move, and is related to the all-important matter of land: the peasant generally possesses it, whereas the worker is usually landless.

Many analyses of the Balkan problems play up rightly the role of the church, whether it be Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic, in the peasants' lack of enthusiasm for Communism. Others stress the generations-old nationality antipathies which have some influence. Certainly Pan-Slavism is not paying high dividends in rural areas in

2 Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEI Bulgaria EEI

584

TABLE 7

LENGTH OF ENGAGEMENT PERIOD, DRAGALEVTSY, 1935*

No engagement	1 couple
"Short"	3 couples
1 day	1 couple
3 days	1 couple
1 week	18 couples
10 days	1 couple
2 weeks	3 couples
6 weeks	1 couple
8 weeks	1 couple

* Information gotten from people selected at random. They were of varying ages and had been married for varying periods of time.

B. TABLES ABOUT THE FARMS

241
423

TABLE 8

SIZE OF HOLDINGS OF DRAGALEVTSY FARMERS, WITH NUMBER ENTIRELY OWNED, CENSUS OF 1926*

SIZE OF HOLDING (DECARES†)	NUMBER OF FARMS	TOTAL DECARES	NUMBER OF FARMS OWNED	TOTAL DECARES OWNED
0- 10	12	35.2	11	32.2
10- 20	14	237.5	14	237.5
20- 30	27	674.9	26	654.6
30- 40	32	1,147.1	29	1,048.4
40- 50	21	947.3	21	947.3
50- 60	24	1,319.4	22	1,206.3
60- 70	17	1,104.0	17	1,104.0
70- 80	19	1,429.8	17	1,276.?
80- 90	7	589.7	7	589.?
90-100	7	637.3	7	637.3
100-150	37	4,300.2	34	3,950.6
150-200	13	2,191.8	13	2,191.8
200-300	2	492.7	2	492.7
Total	232	15,126.9	220	14,388.6
Per cent owned			94.8	95.1

* Monastery farm of 1,176.1 decares omitted from table.
† 1 decare is ¼ acre.

8: Bojkoff K-4, 5 (no date) 1946 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

These figures show how strongly the people are attached to the cultivation of the land. The background of Bulgarian culture was and still is agricultural labour.

44. Bulgaria is a Land of small Ownerships. This is the Background of her Democracy.

Let us show the variety of occupations in Bulgaria. The occupations of 1.284.993 households [1]) in Bulgaria are distributed as follows:

	Households		%
Agriculture	838.899	or	65.2
Manufacture of materials	160.000	„	12.4
Commerce and credit	61.518	„	4.8
Public work and service	38.762	„	3.0
Transport and communications	36.682	„	2.9
Science and education	20.114	„	1.7

The distribution of land property will be shown in the figures below. The total of private properties being 42.810.815 dekars equal to 100%, the distribution is as follows:

Husbandries up to 10 decares [2])		1.3%
„ from 10 to 20 decares		4.0%
„ „ 20 „ 30 „		6.6%
„ „ 30 „ 50 „		18.1%
„ „ 50 „ 100 „		36.9%
„ „ 100 „ 150 „		17.0%
„ „ 150 „ 200 „		7.3%
„ „ 200 „ 300 „		5.2%
„ „ 300 „ 500 „		2.0%
„ „ 500 and more		1.6%

Since at present Bulgaria could not rely on more guaranteed sources of income for her economy, than those which are connected with her agriculture; along with the efforts laid for the improvement of crafts and industries, the Government takes special care for the agriculture of the country, as the main support of the state and the main background of the democracy of her agrarian population.

How is land worked in Bulgaria? The private and public land for exploitation being 43.684.381 decares equal to 100%, its distriburion is as follows:

---

[1]) This information is based on statistics for 1934, which is the last census year.

[2]) One decare = 0.247 acres. One acre = 4.047 decares.

AGRICULTURE

It is impossible to treat adequately in the limited space of a chapter a subject of such capital importance for Bulgaria as its agriculture, which is its staple industry and which forms the occupation of some 80% of her population, and only a brief and superficial survey can be given To those who are interested in the subject, the works of Prof. N. V. Dolinski, of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales of Varna are recommended, who has treated this theme with an insight and comprehension worthy of the savant he is. Prof. Dolinski, being a Russian and former professor at the Polytechnical Institute ot St. Petersburg, has studied thoroughly every aspect of this subject and the conclusions he has arrived at as to the future of Bulgarian agriculture are not optimistic. He thus differs from most Bulgarians, who being temperamentaly over-confident, and somewhat unconscious of their limitations, take an over sanguine outlook as to the future, believing as they do, that persevering and unremitting labour can surmount every obstacle.

Bulgaria, as is well known, is a country of small holders; according to the census of 1926, the 4,469,987·02 hectares of cultivated surface was divided among 734,191 individual farmsteads, each of an average area slightly over 6 hectares[1]. The tendency however has been towards further subdivision. In 1929 the number of independent holdings had grown to 807,309, and by 1931 to 840,900. The progressive segmentation of the farmsteads is an evil which eventually will have to be stopped through the adoption of the right of primogeniture concerning landed property, or by some other means. As matters stand, there are very few sons of farmers willing to continue their

[1] The following table gives detailed figures as to the size and number of the holdings:

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241
423

Area of farmsteads	Number of owners	% of total	Number of hectares	% of total
1 to 2 hectares	86,323	11.8	429,153	0·9
2 to 3 "	90,418	12·3	1,326,784	3
3 to 4 "	88,064	12	2,166,102	4·8
4 to 5 "	72,011	9·8	3,211,065	7·2
5 to 6 "	59,714	8·1	3,250,262	7·3
6 to 7 "	49,287	6·7	3,178,436	7·1
7 to 8 "	39,480	5·4	2,946,641	6·6
8 to 9 "	32,614	4·4	2,777.252	6·2
9 to 10 "	25,462	3·5	2,408.585	5·4
10 to 15 "	68,724	9·4	8,260.854	18·5
15 to 20 "	23,281	3·2	3,976.965	8·9
20 to 25 "	9,092	1·2	2.001,162	4·5
25 to 30 "	3,605	0·5	1,034,139	2·3
over 30 "	4,766	0·6	4,924,404	11
Total	734,191	100	44,692,987	100

parents' calling because they know that at the latter's death, the farmstead will have to be divided among all the members of the family, and that the portion which will revert to them will be too small to support them; hence their unwillingness to remain on the land, and their efforts to become State functionaries. This is also why the secondary agricultural schools have comparatively few students, the majority of whom become eventually functionaries instead of settling on the land. This explains why the progress of farming has not been commensurate with the strenuous efforts made by the government for its promotion.

A peculiar feature of these holdings is that they are often divided into ten or even more different strips, scattered about in various places, often far apart from one another, and of the most surprising dimensions. Thus a great deal of land is wasted on roads and boundaries. This intense subdivision militates against the introduction of rational methods of cultivation, and causes a huge waste of time to farmers who have to trudge from one strip to another in rotation along pathways which are well nigh impassable after heavy rains. One of the causes which led to the dividing up of the farmstead into several strips was to provide against the danger of loss

by hail which is frequent in Bulgaria. Scattered holdings considerably reduced the risk from such loss, for only some of the strips belonging to one farmstead could be so affected. But this custom has outlived its usefulness, for the State now insures farmers against such loss[2] at a very slight charge, and it has wisely embarked on a policy of encouraging the unification of holdings; even a law has been passed, rendering this obligatory in any commune, 50% of the inhabitants of which express a desire to have their scattered strips unified. Unfortunately little progress has been made so far in this direction owing to the extreme diversity of the quality of the soil in most localities and to the fact that the peasantry is over-conservative by nature, and this is apparent from the comparatively few farmers who insure against loss by hail. In 1934 their number was stated to be 99,600, the premiums collected 22 million leva, and the disbursements made by the State for losses by hail sustained by 25,000 farmers amounted to 25 millions. The average annual loss caused by hail is estimated at 500 millions. Even as regards their cattle, farmers appear equally conservative, for in 1934 out of a total head of large cattle numbering 3 millions, only 105,000 head of cattle vere insured.

If this policy of unifying the scattered strips could be carried through, some 400,000 hectares would be rendered available for cultivation which are now occupied by roads, pathways, boundaries, hedges etc. T. At. Yaranov in his "Bulgaria to-day and to-morrow" estimates the cost ot carrying out this unification of the various strips at 1,584 million leva, or roughly at 4000 leva per hectare and as the actual price of farm land devoted to cereal cultivation averages 5,000 to 8,000 [1] leva, the operation would be practicable. The advantages to be derived from

[1] The pre-war price ranged between 1000 to 1500 leva (gold) per hectare.

[2] [i.e. hail damage, 181 see cat. 116, p. 180-181-A]

241
423
[657]

241 the application of this measure would be multiple. It
•423 would increase the available surface for cultivation by 10%. It would effect a great saving of time to the farmers, who would no longer be obliged to waste their time by visiting scattered holdings, but who would then only have to attend to one. It would permit the rationalisation of agriculture by making feasible the use of agricultural machinery. So far this extreme parcellation of the land has proved an unsuperable obstacle to the employ of modern implements. Thus during the period 1925—1930 some 2620 tractors were bought, at a cost of 1000 million leva, but it has been found impossible to utilise them for ploughing, and the only use they have been put to was to make them work the threshing machines.

However alluring this prospect of regrouping the holdings may be, it is regrettable that it can not be realised for lack of funds. As matters stand an extensive use of expensive agricultural machinery is not likely to prove profitable when there is plenty of cheap labour available and imported oil fuel is dear; besides, the smallholder would scarcely possess sufficient means to acquire them and would not know how to keep them in good condition.[1]
241 The utilisation of machinery on the farms could be
243 lucratively carried out only if it mere undertaken on a co-operative basis, but in such a case it would be necessary to found co-operative societies in every village before proceeding with the wholesale employ of machinery. However, even with such improvements, Bulgaria could

[1] During the Liaptchev administration the government undertook to introduce by hook or crook modern machinery, and a large number was foisted on the peasantry but never utilised. Many complaints were made as to the peasantry having been encouraged to run into debt merely in order to buy machines. The exposures made by certain deputies on May 22 and 30, 1932, on this subject are not at all edifying.

8: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1951 EF1 Yugoslavia
Bulgaria EE1

665 Labor Party, are on the way to Socialism and endeavoring to reach it in a peaceful way. . . . I should like to tell our English friend that we too feel that it is quite possible in Bulgaria, granted the work and necessary preparations, to pass on to Socialism some day without dictatorship of the proletariat, on the basis of democracy and a parliamentary régime.

Now, however, the British Labor Party had become a horde of imperialist hyenas, lackeys of Wall Street. Now Socialism was to be attained in Bulgaria not in a peaceful parliamentary way but by force. To make sure that his audience would swallow this strong meat Dimitrov threw in the ominous warning that the program had been developed under the guidance of Stalin himself; he "personally" had helped with advice and explanations so that any "mistakes" which were made could be "corrected quickly."

The Dimitrov talk, though derided in Jugoslavia as postponing indefinitely the advent of Socialism, nevertheless gave notice that the proletarian revolution would now be pushed in Bulgaria by all means and at all costs. Applied to the agrarian problem, it meant that the class war was to begin in earnest in the villages. Collectivization had not proved any more popular with Bulgarian peasants than it had in other agricultural countries. Even at their face value, the official figures of progress in forming collectives (more delicately called "working agricultural enterprises") were not impressive. And one hesitates to accord them face value because of the ample opportunity and great temptation to juggle statistics. Changes are made frequently in the rules for membership, the presidents of village councils (soviets) are desperately anxious to make a good showing in their reports to Sofia, and the Minister of Agriculture himself hopes to save his skin by reporting progress to Moscow.

474 241 423 At the end of 1948, according to a published Soviet source, 73,000 Bulgarian peasant households owning 300,000 hectares of land were joined in 1,000 agricultural coöperatives (collectives); and by August 1, 1949, the figures had become 146,583 households, owning 538,458 hectares, in 1,594 coöperatives.[3] Writing in the official Cominform journal in November 1949, T. Chernokolev, a member of the

[3] N. Vorobyev, *New Times*, Moscow, September 7, 1949.

8: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1951 EF1 Yugoslavia
Bulgaria EE1

Bulgarian Politburo, reported that the number of peasant households had recently reached 147,000 (13.3 percent of all households), the amount of land involved was now 540,000 hectares (11.2 percent of all cultivated land), and the total of coöperatives was 1,600.[4] Soon after Vulko Chervenkov became Prime Minister [5] he revealed that at the end of the first quarter of 1950 the number of coöperative organizations had increased by only 33 over the figure given previously, and that the number of peasant families involved had grown by only about 28,000.[6]

This unsatisfactory organizational progress was matched by production failures. The government organ, *Otechestven Front*, complained on March 27, 1949, that spring sowing quotas which should already have been completed were fulfilled only 56 percent for wheat, 45 percent for rye, 55 percent for barley and 51 percent for oats. It called these figures "extremely disquieting."[7] The results were noticed in the failure of the peasants to meet their wheat and rye requisition quotas in the autumn. Quotas were fulfilled or overfilled in districts bordering the Black Sea or Rumania, *i.e.* where Soviet pressure was most direct, but in districts towards Jugoslavia they were fulfilled only from 20 to 27 percent and in the three districts of Bulgarian Macedonia 59, 54 and 20 percent respectively. The correspondent of *The Economist* (London, November 5, 1949) who reported these figures remarked that "clearly, the 'Tito influence' does exist in Bulgaria, and especially in Bulgarian Macedonia." In the spring of 1950 the same pattern was repeated. Gaston Coblentz gave quotations from *Rabotnichesko Delo* and other Sofia newspapers calling attention to "disastrous" failures in agricultural production, "disgraceful episodes" where village councils showed "open opposition" to the mechanization of agriculture (an indirect way of saying that they opposed the collective farms), and so on. The spring plowing, supposed to be completed by March 8, was

[4] *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!*, Bucharest, November 18, 1949.

[5] On February 1, 1950, Chervenkov succeeded Vasil Kolarov, who had died January 23. Chervenkov, who was Dimitrov's brother-in-law, had spent many years in Moscow.

[6] Harry Schwartz, *The New York Times*, May 18, 1950.

[7] Quoted by Michael Padev, *Manchester Guardian*, August 16, 1949.

8: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1951 EF1 Yugoslavia
Bulgaria EE1

scribed in the preceding chapter he had "carried out a policy leading to the estrangement of the overwhelming mass of medium peasants and of a great part of the small peasants from the Fatherland Front and putting them under the influence of *kulaks* and the reaction, thus destroying the union between workers and peasants." [10] This was very convenient. At one stroke Kostov was linked with the crisis in the countryside, and an excuse was provided for the existence of the crisis. It was not a very good excuse, for the same difficulties with the peasants continued after Kostov had been eliminated from any share in the country's economic life. As for the expectation that the trial would sober nationalist elements in the Party, that did not seem to work out to Moscow's satisfaction either. One count of top-level Communist officials purged in the six months beginning October 1949 showed a tally of nearly 50.

Class war in the villages, presaged by Dimitrov in December 1948, did not materialize at once. The expectation may have been that the simple threat would overcome peasant resistance, but when it did not a new model statute for collective farms was brought up "for discussion," *i.e.* to prepare the peasants for what the Party had decided would now be imposed by force. Peasants who had come into the collective system and those who had stayed out would both be hit. A member's share in the profits of a coöperative (if there were profits: another story) was henceforth going to be figured 30 percent on the amount of land he had put in and 70 percent on the number of "work days" he contributed, instead of being compensated, as formerly, in direct proportion to the amount of land and the number of "work days." In other words, he was becoming one-third a landowner and two-thirds a state agricultural worker. If he knew about what had happened to the Russian peasants in the final step of the Soviet agrarian "reform" in 1937 he could foresee what would become of the remaining one-third of Bulgarian land values. Actually, of course, the distinction between "rent" for land and "pay" for labor often was theoretical anyway. The product of a collective is turned in to the state in amounts fixed in advance and in return for payment at rates which in practice are confiscatory. A

[10] Report by the Bulgarian radio, Sofia, July 20, 1949, of the proceedings on that date in the Bulgarian Grand National Assembly.

8: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1951 EF1 Yugoslavia
Bulgaria EE1

surplus may or may not remain to be divided among the peasants. Often, as Kolarov admitted, there is none. The rate at which it would have been divided if it had existed is then only of theoretical interest. There is no space here to indicate the punishments awaiting the peasants who infringe the new statute.[11] Even negligence is defined as "treason to the common good" and punished as—treason. But I must add one item contributed by a Bulgarian friend of mine, for it reveals clearly one of the important intentions of present Communist policy in Bulgaria. In this man's native village the coöperative contains both industrial and agricultural workers. The first group is scrupulously allotted the same number of ration cards as the second. Nothing could be fairer, except that the first group contains 14 persons and the latter about 500. "Recipe for horse and rabbit stew: one horse, one rabbit."

Membership in collectives is "voluntary," but the meaning of this is shown by Prime Minister Chervenkov's description of what is to happen to peasants who do not join. "All tractors and agricultural machines belonging to peasants outside the coöperative farms should be confiscated," he has warned, and in future "only peasants belonging to coöperative farms can use tractors and machines." After this gloss on the 1950 model statute there is no need to go into further details. Peasants who do not have the use of farm machinery cannot fulfill their government quotas, let alone have anything left over to feed themselves and their families. They will "volunteer" or starve.

We have seen repeatedly that Bulgaria is the satellite where extreme Soviet measures are given their tryout. She was the first to suppress religious freedom and the first to introduce the system of local government by soviets. She was also the first, as already mentioned, to become officially a one-party state, and Dimitrov was the first satellite leader to proclaim the advent of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Russia's reasons for pushing ahead in Bulgaria seem to be two. It is the country where, with the exception of Rumania, her physical domination comes closest to being absolute. But whereas Russians are contemptuous of Rumanians, and are hated in return, they feel close to Bulgarians in race and language and suppose that they will repay past favors by swinging naturally into their allotted

[11] Details are given in *The Economist*, London, May 27, 1950.

113, 423, 474 Bulgaria EEl

[For information pertaining to cooperative farms and collectivization, see 5: Free Europe Committee, El Europe, category 116, pp. 61, 64-65, 67--Analyst.]